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S E R M O N

Preached at the

ABBY-CHURCH, WESTMINSTER,

On TUESDAY JUNE 3. 1760:

AT A

J U B I L E E

Then kept by the MEMBERS of the

COLLEGIATE CHURCH,

Account of its being the 200th year since the Date of their
CHARTER OF FOUNDATION.

By the RIGHT REVEREND

Z A C H A R Y, *Pearce*

Lord Bishop of ROCHESTER, and Dean of
WESTMINSTER.

L O N D O N:

Printed for B. DOD, in AVI-MARY-LANE.

M.DCC.LX.

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PROVERBS XXXI.

*Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own
works praise her in the gates.*

TH E S E words conclude the character of
a woman, who at the 10th verse of this
chapter is called *a virtuous woman*: but
the Greek Version of the LXX seems
better to have understood the meaning of the Hebrew
Original, when it renders it by *γυνὴ ἀνδρική*, *a manly
woman*; i. e. a woman possessed of all those qualities,
which more usually belong to a man, and which,
when exerted by him, make his character to be an

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excellent one. She is here commended for her great industry and application to domestick business, for her prudence in the management of her family, for her gaining their good-will and affections by her engaging behaviour, and for her enriching them by the means of those manufactures, which she encouraged, assisted in, and saw brought to perfection.

SUCH a virtuous woman who can find, says the author of this description. Uncommon it may have been; but former ages have seen instances of this so amiable a character, of such a woman as did put in practice those good qualities, which make the name even of the worthiest men to be received with favour and esteem.

THE greatest kingdoms, (you well know) are considered by moral and political writers, as large families; and therefore I presume, that such a woman is present to the thoughts of all of you: one, to whose memory we are now paying the just tribute of gratitude; one, whose long and happy reign over this nation hath always been (and ever will be, no doubt) distinguished as the most conspicuous and the brightest part of the English history; one, who by her bounty to us hath continued in a more especial manner some of the blessings of her reign to this collegiate foundation, which is now fed by her hand, though her hand is no more, being constantly supplied by that gift, which

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she bountifully and wisely contrived to out-live the giver.

IT hath indeed out-lived the giver, but it ought not to out-live our gratitude. Distance of time makes no difference in hearts which are prepared to receive favours aright. If we look back 200 years (for such is the space between the present time and the date of our charter of foundation) the same thankful acknowledgments are due, as if we had but just come from receiving the favour. Nature perhaps will abate a little even in the best of men by wearing off much of the impresson on the memory; but reason will (as it were) touch up the plate again, and renew the impresson; enabling men, by what they know, and what they learn, by what they feel, and what they read, to revive past thoughts, and make them present for all useful purposes, when a proper season of reflection is offer'd.

THAT we may be for a while thus employed, I propose to lay before you some considerations in relation to the great and glorious queen Elizabeth; a name to which history will ever do honour, as it is a name which will ever do honour to history.

LET us view her therefore in these four points of light. First, in her personal character, and then in her royal one: next, as she was the author of our happy

Reformation in religion, and lastly, as she was, by a still nearer relation to us, the foundress of this collegiate society.

I. WHEN I enter upon her personal character, I see, methinks, the marks of a divine Providence preparing her temper and disposition of mind for the great weight of power and glory which she was afterwards to sustain.

THOUGH the daughter of a mighty king, yet as soon almost as she was enabled by her years to make any observation, she found that her mother had suffer'd death as a criminal, and that she by the legislature was debarred from succeeding to her father's throne. Thus were the hopes soon blasted, with which her birth might have furnished her, and she was early made to perceive, that the golden bough of royalty, which hung in her sight, hung at a great distance from her reach.

DURING her brother's reign, though she had been replaced in the line of succession to the crown by her father's will, confirmed by an act of parliament, yet the prospect of her succeeding was then such a distant one, that little regard was paid to her; and the wisest method, which she *could* take, was the method which she *did* take, to change ambition into contentedness, to collect herself as much as possible within herself, to nurse and cherish

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cherish such virtues in her mind as might deserve and well use, if ever she enjoyed, what her uncertain situation gave to her such small hopes of enjoying.

In the next reign, that of her sister, the difficulties before mentioned were greatly increased by the difference of the religions of the two sisters. She had been at one time strictly guarded in a prison; at other times confin'd to country-seats, as much under restraint, though with less appearance of it, than when committed by warrant to the Tower; and all times she was surrounded by those, who were ready to watch and note and report to her disadvantage all her words and actions. Here then she was to tread warily; and adversity, in so nice a point and so blood-shedding a season as that was, called for all that reason could suggest by way of caution; to assist all that religion could suggest to her in the way of duty. *Her life (as she says in the preamble of our charter of foundation) was frequently in danger, and many kinds of death were sought after and contrived against her.* To obviate those as much as human prudence could avail (and the divine Providence in its goodness did the rest for her), she withdrew her thoughts as well as her person from courts, and (as much as possible) from the world. She gave herself up to the study of the learned languages the Greek and the Latin, as well as to those modern ones, which were then fashionable. In all which she made so great a progress, that none of her sex

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(even in those days, when that learning was not uncommon in the sex) ever arrived to be her equals. To these she added not only the reading of history (that great lamp lighted up for the looking back into antiquity), but many other parts of knowledge likewise, which tend not merely to amuse, but to increase the understanding and strengthen the judgment. With these helps, to the use of which her distresses naturally led her, together with those of religious knowledge, she yearly added so much improvement to the virtues and graces of her mind, that a crown, when it fell to her share, might almost seem an unnecessary circumstance in so compleat and finished a character.

II. THUS formed to deserve a throne, the divine Providence for her reward gave to her the possession of one. And let us now consider her in this second point of view, as a sovereign. And here all is greatness, all is glory. Wonders meet our eyes through the whole history of her reign. That she could so often and with so much safety prevail over dangerous factions and insurrections at home; that she could so wisely and so courageously disappoint all the leagues and attempts of foreign princes against her; of princes, the most powerful, the most politick, and the least restrained by any thing but their interests, of any which that age produced; that she should through an uncommon length of reign for above 44 years continue, improve and carry to the greatest height those blessings

blessings which her reign had brought to her people, how shall an equitable historian account for it, except by the acknowledging a divine Providence for her leader and protector? This (no doubt) was the great cause of such distinguished marks of heaven; though, as to subordinate causes and human means, there are others assignable. She loved her subjects, and therefore (for what other can naturally be the consequence?) therefore they loved her. She took care, on all occasions to shew it, and therefore they took care as often to manifest their grateful returns. She filled not only the throne of the realm, but the hearts of her people. There she reigned with the truest empire, and by the wisest use of sovereignty made even their affections, as well as their persons, her subjects.

In what language she was wont to speak to her people, you may learn from this one sentence, which I take the liberty of quoting from her last speech made to her commons in parliament,

“ In my governing this land (says she) I have ever
 “ set the last judgment-day before mine eyes; and so
 “ to rule, as I shall be judged and answer before a
 “ higher Judge; to whose judgment-seat I do appeal,
 “ in that never thought was cherished in my heart,
 “ that tended not to my people's good.”

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Was ever people thus addressed to by their sovereign? Was ever sovereign, thus addressing herself to the people, not believed, not confided in, not intirely beloved?

BUT I leave to history the large detail of the many actions and events of her long reign; a theme, in which it seems to walk with a superior pleasure, as having for its subject an amazing variety of what is good and great. And I shall conclude this part of her character with only saying, what all (I think) must agree in, that this nation under her government enjoyed a greater degree of happiness than it had done in any former days: and if national happiness is not the point upon which those are to be tried, whom God the searcher of hearts hath set over kingdoms; yet most certainly it is the standard, by which alone historians and readers of history, who do not know the heart, can form a judgment of a good prince. *Her own works praise her in the gates;* and, when they thus speak for her, the mouth of slander, either anti-ent or modern, must be opened in vain.

III. If we consider her again as the author of that happy reformation in religion, which this kingdom hath ever since enjoyed, how respectable is her memory, how great should be our gratitude! It was the kindness of divine Providence, which placed her earliest youth among those, who gave her some glimmerings

ings of the light of truth even in the midst of the darkness of Popery. And by the goodness of her understanding and the strength of her reason she was soon enabled to see, that the religion of the blessed Jesus had been (as it were) secularized; had in many instances taken its mode and shape from the fashions of the age; and had some of its doctrines, and almost all of its rights and ceremonies, brought to that standard, which best suited with worldly interests and temporal advantages. This was the Popery, which she, assisted by the major part of this nation, thought it her duty to reform. It boasted much of its antiquity, and had (it must be acknowledged) this one mark of antiquity, that it had lost much of its original beauty. It had then for its two supporters, enthusiasm and superstition; both of them intruders only, and having nothing to make them be thought of the family of truth, but a few seemingly-like features without any essential reality.

SHE employed the learned, the pious, and the wise, to examine all over again, by the surest test of truth, the holy Scriptures. And the event was (what must ever be the event, when sincerity is employed in the search), that many false doctrines were (like bad wares) returned upon the hands of the Italian manufacturers in religion; and all such rites and ceremonies were disbanded, as seemed to favour superstition, and

to defeat the good purposes of that religion, into whose service they had been enlisted.

WHAT she gave to us in the room of Popery, we all know, because we all do now happily enjoy it. More happy would it be for us, if we enjoyed it as we ought to do, if our behaviour was reformed as well as our worship, and if we could be able to say to all the world, "See what our religion is by our lives, and see whether our lives are not agreeable to our religion."

IV. WHEN we consider her in the last point of view, as the foundress of this collegiate society, our hearts receive a new and peculiar motive for gratitude to her royal care. She founded this church, with all the branches belonging to it, out of a thankful acknowledgment to heaven (as the preamble of her charter of foundation expresses it) for her having escaped so many hazards of life, and for her having been able to introduce the pure and reformed religion into this nation; intending, that by this institution true religion and pure worship, and good instruction drawn from the fountains of truth the holy Scriptures, might be for ever cherished and improved among us: and that the youth here educated might (like young plants in a kindly soil) meet with a cultivation and a growth, which might afterwards produce good fruits, not only of learning, but of piety and virtue, for the perpetual main-

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maintenance of that religion, which she had established.

ALL of us in our several stations have been benefited by her royal bounty; those of us more particularly, who have received our education in that seminary, which she here erected, and to the success of which she often attended, sometimes (as we have been told) even in person. Thus planted by her, and duly water'd, and skilfully cultivated, the school, from being at first like the grain of mustard seed, one of the smallest of seeds, has since grown to be a mighty tree, under which a great part of English nobility have had their education, and the school hath received both credit and assistance from them. The cabinet and the field, the church and the courts of justice, can shew you shining examples of such as were formed under this distinguished method of instruction. Here they were first taught to speak with propriety, here to think with judgment, here to emulate what is praise-worthy. Point out what kind and degree of merit you please; and we shall be found to have a large share in it; share enough to let the world see, that the school stands on a ground superior to that of almost all others, as well by the excellency of its education, as by the royalty of its foundation.

LET us then give her of the fruit of her hands; and it is the wish of the preacher, that he had richer fruit

to give her. All that he can now do, is to quit the wide compass of her glorious character, and to call upon you, before he concludes, that you would shew such a grateful remembrance of our benefactress, as she herself desired and wished for, directed and commanded.

(HER two professed views (next to her acknowledgments to heaven for the blessings which she had received) were the improvement of true religion, and the improvement of sound learning in support of that religion: and, for the answering these good purposes, let us call upon, invite, and exhort one another on this occasion.

LET such of us, as are placed in the government of this collegiate foundation, be diligent and careful to set a good example of every thing that is pious and virtuous, that is *lovely* and of *good report*: looking upon ourselves as situated on an hill (more especially with regard to this place), whose pattern, as it *ought* to be followed, so it *will* be followed, by those, of whom we have the direction; and therefore thinking it peculiarly our duty, that our *light should so shine before them, that they may see our works to be good*, and from thence learn to *glorify our father, which is in heaven*.

THE study of the holy Scriptures was another principal object of that renowned sovereign. To this

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her charter and our statutes earnestly invite us; and, if they had been silent on that head, the nature of our profession, and our station here loudly calls us to it. It is expected, that we should be thoroughly instructed ourselves in what we are to make matter of instruction to others. We are to be *mighty* in those sacred writings, in which they are to be knowing. From our abundance they are to draw their supplies; and if the spring be dried up (or be weak) at the fountain-head, we know whose is the fault, and how sore will be the punishment.

ALL kinds of learning, which tend to explain or enforce the precepts of Christianity, are the oyl, with which our lamps should be provided: with these even our vessels should be stored, for the more plentiful supply of our lamps upon extraordinary occasions; that, if ever enthusiasm with its demure face, or superstition with its bold one, should assault us, or any belonging to our care, we may be found at last to have reason on our side, the Scriptures for our rule, and the blessing of heaven for our portion.

I come next to address a few words to you, who have the happiness of now receiving your education in that part of this collegiate foundation, which is one of the great nurseries of learning. Of this you may justly boast, on this you may ever value yourselves, if the labours of your teachers shall be found to have had the

the designed effect upon your morals and your learning. The idle and the vicious cannot possibly contribute to the credit of the school by *declaring* where they were bred; perhaps they may by *concealing* it. Would you be thought to have been educated there, from whence so many eminent patterns of all merit have gone out before you? Be sure to take care and to endeavour early, that you may be distinguished as they were; and here let the blossoms be seen of what is afterwards to produce ripe and rich fruits both in your knowledge and your practice.

REMEMBER always for what the school was founded. It was for the furtherance of useful learning and pure religion. If you part the two, you put asunder these things, which our founders joined together. If while you give a proper attention to your studies (and the want of that can scarcely happen), you are less regardful of your moral and religious behaviour, you will be but spots and blemishes in the noble plan; and it will be rather a benefit, that all memory of your having once been here should be extirpated out of our minds. What master of his business would try to work with the bark, when he might work with the timber? Learning is but the bark, a good cover and security to the more solid part of a Christian, which is a good life founded upon good principles. Be sober minded, you cannot be too young to begin this. Let your piety and virtue be the principal

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principal figures in the picture, where your wit and parts and learning may be a necessary groupe for setting the piece off to advantage. For the latter you are to give an account to man only; for the former to God, who expects the most from those to whom the most has been given. And if so, dreadful will be the account of the abusers of his mercies. — But it is my hearty wish, and I will flatter myself with the hope of ever seeing, that the distinguishing name, by which you are now called, conveys no ideas to a hearer, but those of good morals, and good grounds both of human and divine knowledge.

And let us all remember, constantly and faithfully to put in practice every thing, which our several duties require; with grateful hearts for the benefits which we enjoy, and a strong desire to make those benefits our own by our behaviour, that what was gratuitous in the giver, may be merited and (in some sort) earned by the receivers. Thus, as *her own works sufficiently praise her in the gates*, we shall be able, in the way which she herself wished, to give *her likewise of the fruit of her hands*.

Which may God of his goodness grant for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ, &c.

EXTRACT

FROM THE CHARTER OF FOUNDATION,

Referred to in the foregoing SERMON.

ELISABETHA Dei gratia Angliæ Franciæ et
Hiberniæ Regina, fidei defensor, &c. Omni-
bus, ad quos præsentis litteræ pervenerint,
Salutem. Cum nuper per quendam actum in Parlia-
mento nostro — Nos utique de eisdem sic scistæ
existentes, divina nos clementia inspirante et suggerente,
pensantes animoque nostro volentes à quam variis
vitæ nostræ discriminibus, quamque multarum gene-
ribus mortis, quibus undique impetite fuimus, Deus
optimus maximus potenti manu sua nos Ancillam suam
omni humano auxilio destitutam liberavit, ac tandem
ad culmen Regiæ Majestatis nostræ umbris alarum
suarum protectam evexit, ac in Solio hujus Regni nostri
sua solum bonitate collocavit; officium nostrum im-
primis arbitramur, non modo absque ulla intermissione
tantorum beneficiorum, quæ nobis impartire dignatus
est,

est, et indies magis magisque imparit, memores fore, et divine Majestatis sue nos gratos pro virium nostrarum imbecillitate prestare et exhibere, verum etiam ut vera Religio, verusque ejus cultus, sine quibus immanitate belluis aut stultitia pecudibus adaequamur, in praedicto nuper Monasterio, unde multis jampridem annis exulaverant, restituantur, et ad primævam sive genuinæ germanæque sinceritatis normam reformatur et reducantur, correctis et quantum possumus penitus oblitis enormitatibus, in quas Monachorum vita et professio longo tempore elapsæ deploratè exorbitaverant. Ideoque operam dedimus quatenus humana perspicere potest infirmitas, ut imposterum ibidem sacrorum eloquiorum documenta, ex quibus tanquam ex limpidissimis fontibus purissimæ divinæ veritatis aquæ exhauriri possint et debent, et nostræ salutiferæ Redemptionis sacramenta purè administrarentur, bonorum disciplina sincere observetur; Juventus, quæ in Silva nostræ reipublicæ, ut tenellæ quædam virgulæ, indies crescit, in bonis literis liberalitè ad majorem ejusdem reipublicæ decorem instituatur; Senectus viribus destituta, eorum præsertim, qui circa Personam nostram, aut alioquin circa Regni nostri negotia publica bene, graviter et fideliter nobis servierunt, rebus ad victum necessariis condignè foveatur, — atque ut hæc omnia tam necessaria pariter et utilia tam dignum propriumque sortiantur effectum, nos tandem cōsiderantes, quòd Scitus dicti nuper Monasterii beati Petri Westmonasterii, in cujus Basilica multa tum præcharissimi Avi nostri Regis Henrici

Septimi inter ejus ætatis Reges potentissimi ac pruden-
tissimi, tum aliorum progenitorum nostrorum quondam
Regum Angliæ præclara monumenta conductur, sit
locus aptus, conveniens et necessarius erigend', insti-
tuend' ordinand', et stabiliend' quoddam collegium sive
Ecclesiam Collegiatam de uno Decano Presbytero et
duodecim Prebendariis Presbyteris ibidem Omnipotenti
Deo in perpetuum deservituris, ipsius Scitum dicti
nuper Monasterii beati Petri Westmonasterii, ac locum
et Ecclesiam ipsius in Ecclesiam Collegiatam creati,
erigi, fundari et stabiliiri decrevimus, prout per præ-
sentes decernimus, et eandem Ecclesiam Collegiatam de
uno Decano Presbytero et duodecim Prebendariis Pres-
byteris tenore presentium realiter et ad plenum pro
nobis, Heredibus et Successoribus nostris creamus,
erigimus, fundamus, ordinamus, facimus, constituimus
et stabilimus perpetuis futuris temporibus duraturum,
et sic stabiliiri ac imperpetuum inviolabiliter observari
volumus et jubemus per presentes litteras nostras confirmari

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